

"Songs In The Night: Song Of Adoration!"

Text: Luke 2:20,

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told unto them."

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

A first grade class was singing Christmas carols in school on the last day of classes before the Christmas vacation. The teacher was walking throughout the class while they sang, and she thought she detected the wrong words coming from a certain part of the room. So she had them sing the verse over again while she made her way to that part of the room. They were singing "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night," and sure enough, one little boy was singing, "While Shepherd Washed Their Socks By Night."

In our scripture this morning we read once again, the beautiful story of the visit to the shepherds by the angel of the Lord. This is perhaps the most widely quoted portions of the Nativity story. The visit by the Magi may be much more vivid in detail and much more thrilling because of the nature of the station in life held by these men, as well as the magnificent presents they brought. ~~But for sheer simplicity, the shepherd story is~~ People remember these kingly visitors because most of us are awed by royalty. We are more accustomed to the common things of life, and so when royalty is mentioned we are inquisitive as to how they live and act. In the Lerner and Loewe musical "Camelot" there is a song entitled "I Wonder What The King Is Doing Tonight," which is an expression of how ~~the~~ the common people ponder the ways of royalty. But for sheer simplicity, the story of the shepherds ~~is the~~ and their involvement in the Nativity is tops.

It is rather significant when we read this story, to know that shepherds were mostly despised by the orthodox good people of the day. Shepherds were unable to keep the minute details of the ceremonial laws. They could not observe all of the rules and regulations and meticulous hand-washings that the law imposed upon them. They had to be with their flocks, constantly looking after their needs. Thus, the orthodox people looked upon them as being very common.

William Barclay states that he believes these shepherds were rather significant

people, for he reasonsthey ight have been Temple shepherds. An unblemished lamb was sacrificed in the Temple morning and evening. To meet the demand for pure and unblemished lambs, the Temple authorities had their own special private flocks. These flocks were pastured near Bethlehem. This would be necessary, because we are told that even today, there is rich lush green grass that grows abundantly in and around Bethlehem. Bethlehem is situated about 5 miles from Jerusalem, so it is quite likely the Temple flocks were pastured there. To add to the significance of this story, wouldn't it be appropriate that the ones who tended the lambs to be used in the Temple for the forgiveness of sins, would be among the first to see the Lamb of God Who take away the sin of the world? If this is the case, then we can understand why the shepherds were among the first to be visited with the news of this birth.

But we must also observe that although the shepherds were visited by the angel of the Lord, and they heard the angelic host praising God with Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," ~~and all of this~~ they refused to be completely overawed by it all. They were very much afraid we are told, and well they should have been. But when the angels had departed from them and they once again found themselves alone with their sheep, they said to one another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." They were willing to re-act to the situation, in other words.

So we are told they went to the stable and found Him lying in the manger as they were told it would be. But even with being told by angels, and then seeing it firsthand, they were not content to let it go at that, for they had to broadcast it for we are told, "And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child."

Thus they went out and told of ~~all this~~ the events of that night. The 20th verse of this portion of Scripture tells the end result of the visit of the shepherds to ~~visit~~ the Christ child. We read, "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

They were not content to remain mute. They had to tell of the events of that night. Their hearts and their lives had been filled to overflowing by what God had done. Although they had been involved in an event out of the ordinary, they were still filled with the wonder of it all. Here was a group of common people, who were privileged to be a part of a miracle of God. They had been involved in what we would call a "mountaintop experience." Yet, with the immensity ~~of it~~ and the vast implications of this act, and although they were on a plane far above their normal station in life, they were able to come back to the common ordinary level and still give praise and Glory to God. This is the wonder of it all. That, unlike most people who would resent being brought back to the hum-drum, common work-a-day world, they could continue to look to God in praise.

Perhaps this is why God chose these men to be the recipients of this wonderful event. Thousands of people had crowded that town on that particular night. All of them had left Bethlehem either the next day or a day or so following, never knowing what had taken place there. Many of them had been guests at the inn, and had left the premises completely unaware that an earth shaking event had occurred in the stable in the back. A goodly portion of them were perhaps from the aristocracy, or were people of wealth and means. But it was not to them that the birth of Jesus Christ was revealed. The prophet Isaiah ~~asked the question~~ in the 53rd chapter asks the question, "And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Then he goes on to describe the common ordinary life that Jesus was to lead. Is it any wonder then, that the common ordinary Jesus, was revealed to those persons to whom he could identify?

But there is yet another aspect of this revelation to common shepherds that needs to be looked at.

John Nelson Darby was a noted clergyman in Ireland. He was summoned once to see a poor boy who was dying. He told of having to walk for over an hour over b^road roads to get to the house. He entered the miserable hovel they called a house and in the dim interior was unable to distinguish any signs of life. Then he noticed an old woman sitting on a stool and bent over the embers of a peat fire. He asked for the boy and she pointed to a darker corner of the room. He went to the corner and there on a heap of straw was a skinny boy of about 17 or 18. He had a very thin cover over him and very evidently was in

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT Dec. 22, 1974

REV. RALPH C. LINK, PASTOR
MRS. MARILYN STEPHENSON, ORGANIST
MR. RALPH COOPER, CHOIR DIRECTOR
MRS. CYNDIE SYBERT, YOUTH CHOIR DIRECTOR
JODIE MARTE, TERRY MCCLIMANS - ACOLYTES

ORDER FOR HOLY COMMUNION 11:00 A.M.
PRELUDE MUSIC: "THE WORSHIP OF THE ANGELIC HOST" JAMES
"IN DULEI JUBILO" PETHEL

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 108 "O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM"

*ASCRIPTION - CHORAL AMEN

*CALL TO WORSHIP

*INVOCATION

*PRAISE

*PASTOR - O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS

*PEOPLE - AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE

*DOXOLOGY

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 2: 8-20

LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERING

(ANTHEM BY YOUTH CHOIR) "THE LITTLE DRUMMER BOY"-SIMEONE

ANTHEM: "HOLY NIGHT" WILSON - CHANCEL CHOIR

SERMON: "SONGS IN THE NIGHT: SONG OF ADORATION!"

*GLORIA PATRI

*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (APOSTLES CREED)

COMMUNION HYMN No. 107 "IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR"

*CALL TO COMMUNION - PAGE 32

*EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER *INSTITUTION *AGNUS DEI

THE HOLY COMMUNION (PLEASE RETAIN ELEMENTS UNTIL

ALL ARE SERVED)

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING - CHORAL AMEN

*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 120 "JOY TO THE WORLD!"

*BENEDICTION AND THREEFOLD AMEN

*POSTLUDE "O THOU JOYFUL"

PRICE

THE ELDERS AND DEACONS WILL USHER AND ALSO SERVE

COMMUNION.

ELDER AND MRS. CHESTER STAUFFER WILL REPRESENT
COUNCIL AT THE DOOR TODAY.

NURSERY WILL BE PROVIDED TODAY BY MRS. LINDA McMILLIN
AND MRS. JANE ARMSTRONG.

HOSPITALIZED: MR. JAMES STEWART - ROOM 7311 - PRES. HOSP.

HOSPITAL - PITTS. (HE WILL BE COMING HOME THIS WEEKEND.)

THERE WILL BE A MEETING AFTER CHURCH FOR ALL THE BOYS
WHO WANT TO PLAY BASKETBALL.

TONIGHT - ANYONE INTERESTED FROM THE YOUTH FELLOWSHIP
AND YOUTH CHOIR IN GOING CAROLING - PLEASE MEET AT
THE CHURCH AT 7:00. THEY WILL RETURN TO THE CHURCH
AFTERWARDS FOR SOME WARM REFRESHMENTS.

TUES. EVE. - CHRISTMAS EVE. - CANDLELIGHT SERVICE
AT 11:00 P.M. - HOLY COMMUNION. Mono/shep tale

WE INVITE ALL CHRISTIANS REGARDLESS OF DENOMINATION
TO PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER WITH US.

PLEASE FILL OUT A COMMUNION CARD SO THAT OUR CHURCH'S
RECORDS ARE ACCURATE. YOU WILL FIND THEM IN THE
RECEPTACLE ON THE BACK OF THE PEWS.

IF VISITORS WILL PUT EITHER THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF
THEIR CHURCH OR THEIR PASTOR'S NAME AND ADDRESS ON
THE BACK OF THE COMMUNION CARD, IT WILL BE FORWARDED.
THE ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY WAS 254.

YOU MAY TAKE YOUR POINSETTA AFTER THE 11 O'CLOCK
SERVICE TODAY OR LEAVE IT AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO
A SHUT-IN.

WE HAVE JANUARY 12, 19, 26; FEB. 2, 16, 23; MAR 2 OPEN
FOR ALTAR FLOWERS - PLEASE LEAVE BEA KNOW TODAY IF
YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ONE OF THESE SUNDAYS - THE
FLOWERS ARE STILL \$8.00 - BECAUSE WE HAVE LADIES WHO
WILL ARRANGE THEM.

NEXT SUNDAY IS THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR AND THE
LAST CHANCE TO MAKE YOUR FINAL COMMITMENT FOR THE
YEAR. THE CHURCH TREASURER'S BOOKS CLOSE AS OF DEC.
31ST. AND EVERYTHING AFTER THAT DATE WILL BE CREDITED
TO 1975. 1975

REV. AND MRS. COOPER WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THE
NICE PEOPLE THAT SENT CARDS AND WERE SO GOOD TO THEM
- THEY WISH YOU ALL A BLESSED CHRISTMAS.

Welcome visitors/sign card/book

Thanks cards

SOME TAPES FROM ORDINATION ALBUM BLIE
IF WANT SIGN UP.

But when angs depart they found selves alone 2
They said, (vs 15b)
They willing re-act 2 situation
S we told (vs 16)
& then not content just C, but must tell (vs 17)
Went out & told events of nite
(end result was (vs 20)

Could not remain mute
had tell what overflowed harts & lives 2 overflow
Altho they involv in event out of ordin,
they still filled with wonder it all

Here group comm peop who privil B part mirac of G
They involv in watt call mtn top exper
yet with immensty & vast implies this act,
& altho on plane far above their station life,
they able come bak comm ordi level life &
still give praise/glory 2 God

This the wonder it all
That, unlike most peop who would resent be brot
bak hum-drum comm work-day world, they continue
look 2 G in praise

Perhaps this why G chose sheps B recipis this event
thousands peop crowded Beth that pattic nite,
all leftv Beth day or so never know what took place
Many guests at inn, & left premis unaware earth
shak event in stable in bak
goodly portion from aristoc, peop welth/means
But not them birth Js Xp revealed

Isa 53 asks, "AND TO WHOM IS THE ARM OF THE LORD
REVEALED?"

(m describ comm ord life Js 2 lead
Any wonder then that comm ord Js revealed 2
those peop 2 whom He could identify?
But nother aspec this revel 2 B looked at &
it pertain 2 His B shepherd also
(Illustration John Darby & dying boy)
this real signif revel 2 sheps at birth Js
His birth herald 2 them 2 show here Good Shep
Here 1 sent by G 2 seek lost sheep of world

This "Song In Night" sheps sang,
"A Song Of Adoration"
their harts filled wonders whown them Al G,
& very possibly sang as we,

"come let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord, TEXT.
"AND THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED, GLORIFYING AND PRAISING
GOD FOR ALL THE THINGS THAT THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN
AS IT WAS TOLD UNTO THEM."

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(Illustration 1st grade class singing "While Shepher
Watched Their Flocks By Night")

Much written/said bout sheps in Nat. story

4 scrip. red beaut story again
visit Magi may B more vivid/thrill Bcause magnif
presents brot

peop remem king visits Bcause most us awed royal
We more accust common things life,
so when royal mention we inquisitive live/act
Lerner/Loewe misic Camelot, song "I Wonder
What The King Is Doing Tonight"
express comm peop pond ways royalty

4 sheer simplic, story sheps & involv in Nat tops
rather signif we read story 2 know sheps mostly
despised by ortho peop of day
they unable keep minute ceremonial details of law
" " observ rules/regul law impose on them
" had B with flocks, constant look 2 needs
Thus, orth look upon as common

Wm Barclay states: these sheps signif peop
perhaps Temple sheps
unblem lamb sacrif Temp morn/eve
2 meet deman 4 pure unblem lams Temp auths had
(m floks

These floks pastur near Beth
This nesess Bcaus rich/lush gras grow there
even 2day it grow same

Beth situat 5mi Jerus
so likely Temp floks pastur there at Beth
2 add 2 signif this story,
wouldn't B approp 1's tend lams used Temp sacrif
4, forgiveness sins, B among 1st 2 C Lam of G
who take away sin of world?

If this case, we underst why sheps visited 1st
news this birth

But must also observ altho sheps visited angel Lord
they herd, "Glory 2 G hiest, & on earth peace
good will 2ward men," they not overawed by it all.
They much afraid & ritely so

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
 Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
 Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.